192 It is not necessary to add more examples of cattle-terms and their uses to demonstrate that we are dealing with a galaxy of
183 words in the arrangement of which a thesaurus of some magnitude might be compiled. I need only emphasize that this intricate and voluminous vocabulary is not technical and departmental but is employed by every one and in manifold situations of ordinary social life. I have only treated a fragment of a fragment of the linguistic field relating to cattle. I could enter into further detail, but, at best, I have only surveyed, and in an amateur way, that field, which invites broader and more specialist research. My purpose has been to draw attention to it and to show how a study of the dominant interest of Nuer might be approached from this angle. The subject is necessarily vast, because, as we have seen, it is not possible to discuss with Nuer their daily affairs, social connexions, ritual acts, or, indeed, any subject, without reference to cattle which are the core round which daily life is organized and the medium through which social and mystical relations are expressed. Nor is Nuer interest in cattle confined to their practical uses and social functions, but is displayed in their plastic and poetic arts, in which they are the chief theme. The over-emphasis on cattle is thus strikingly shown in language, which, moreover, by compelling reference to cattle, whatever be the subject of speech, continually focuses attention on them and makes them the superlative value of Nuer life.

IX

231 Another way in which Nuer engrossment in cattle can be
183 illustrated—our last exemplification thereof—is by noting how readily and frequently they fight about them, for people risk their lives for what they greatly value and in terms of those values.

183 At the present time cattle are the main cause of hostility
231 towards, and suspicion of, the Government, not so much on
●721 account of present taxation as of earlier tax-gathering patrols
578 which were little more than cattle raids and of the avowedly plundering expeditions of the Egyptian Government era that preceded them. Nuer war with the Dinka has been almost entirely offensive and directed towards appropriation of herds and annexation of grazing grounds. Cattle have also been the

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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chief occasion of strife among Nuer themselves. Indeed, after a successful raid on Dinka stock there is often further fighting over the booty. Moreover, Nuer tribes raid one another for cattle. Thus the Leek raid the Jikany, Rengyan, and other western tribes, and cattle raids are of common occurrence along tribal boundaries elsewhere, for to 'steal' (*kwal*) cattle from another tribe is regarded as laudable. Within a tribe, also, fighting frequently results from disputes about cattle between its sections and between individuals of the same section, even of the same village or homestead. Nuer fight on slight provocation and most willingly and frequently when a cow is at stake. On such an issue close kinsmen fight and homes are broken up. When ownership of cattle is in dispute Nuer throw over caution and propriety, showing themselves careless of odds, contemptuous of danger, and full of guile. As my Nuer servant once said to me: 'You can trust a Nuer with any amount of money, pounds and pounds and pounds, and go away for years and return and he will not have stolen it; but a single cow—that is a different matter.'

Nuer say that it is cattle that destroy people, for 'more people have died for the sake of a cow than for any other cause'. They have a story which tells how, when the beasts broke up their community and each went its own way and lived its own life, Man slew the mother of Cow and Buffalo. Buffalo said she would avenge her mother by attacking men in the bush, but Cow said that she would remain in the habitations of men and avenge her mother by causing endless disputes about debts, bride-wealth, and adultery, which would lead to fighting and deaths among the people. So this feud between Cow and Man has gone on from time immemorial, and day by day Cow avenges the death of her mother by occasioning the death of men. Hence Nuer say of their cattle, 'They will be finished together with mankind', for men will all die on account of cattle and they and cattle will cease together.

It must not, however, be supposed that Nuer live in continuous turmoil: the very fact that they are prepared to resist any infringement of their rights in cattle induces prudence in the relations between persons who regard themselves as members of the same group. It may be said, furthermore, that the great

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183 231 626 vulnerability of cattle coupled with the extensive living-space required for them are compatible only with a far recognition of conventions in the settlement of disputes, or, in other words, the existence of a tribal organization embracing a large territory, and of some feeling of community over yet larger areas.

Fighting about ownership of cattle and seizing cattle for what are claimed as debts and compensation for losses are of a somewhat different order to raiding for cattle over which no rights, other than the power of the strong, are asserted. War ●721 against foreign peoples, as distinct from warfare within a tribe, is almost entirely for plunder. Nuer war against the Dinka, therefore, differs from most primitive warfare in that its primary object is acquisition of wealth, for cattle are a form of wealth that not only lasts a long time and reproduces itself, but is, also, easily seized and transported. Furthermore, it enables invaders to live on the country without commissariat. Crops and dwellings can be destroyed, but cattle can be confiscated and taken home. This quality, which has given pastoral peoples a bias in favour of the arts of war rather than the arts of peace, has meant that the Nuer are not entirely dependent on their own cattle, but can augment their herds and restore the ravages of rinderpest, and have, in fact, for a long time increased their stock, and hence supplemented their food-supply, by raiding; a condition that has shaped their character, economy, and political structure. Skill and courage in fighting are reckoned the highest virtues, raiding the most noble, as well as the most profitable, occupation, and some measure of political agreement and unity a necessity.

We hasten to add that an explanation of warfare between Nuer and Dinka by reference to cattle and pastures alone is too simple a reduction. Hostility is expressed in terms of cattle, and desire for cattle accounts for some peculiarities of the struggle and some characteristics of the political organizations involved in it, but the struggle itself can only be fully understood as a structural process and we present it as such later.

COO We now pass to a brief examination of the oecological system of which Nuer and their cattle form part to discover the conditions in which cattle-husbandry is practised and how far its practice in a certain environment influences political structure.

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drought. Twenty years ago this was probably more customary among the Lou than to-day, for they had not then the undisputed access to open water that most sections now enjoy. The wells, which have to be redug each year, are two to three feet in diameter and twenty to thirty feet in depth, and their excavation takes two or three days of hard labour. The water, about a foot deep, is clean and fresh and the wells are frequently cleaned out, steps being cut in the walls for this purpose (Plate XV (*b*)). Each household has its own well which is surrounded by shallow mud troughs where the cattle are watered three times daily. Considerable labour is required to draw water for them and much attention is devoted to prevent it from being fouled by sheep and goats, which have their special troughs. Fights sometimes break out over these troughs.

The problem of water is closely related to that of vegetation. In their seasonal movements Nuer seek pasturage as well as drinking-water and they take the cattle to where they know that both can be obtained. When herdsmen drive the cattle from camp to grazing grounds they do not guide them haphazardly across the plain, but with purpose towards stretches of succulent grasses. It is probable, too, that not only are daily and seasonal movements influenced by distribution of grasses, but also that the direction of Nuer expansion has been controlled by their habitat. Nuer claim that they have not overrun the country of the Ngok Dinka because it is poor pasture land and that they are little interested in the Shilluk kingdom for the same reason.

The early rains are the season of fatness, for then the grasses germinate, or renew their growth after the long drought, and the cattle can graze on the young shoots to their content. As the rains advance, grazing becomes more difficult, the ground being flooded and the vegetation rank, and in years of high water may be a serious problem. The cattle have to rely on the short grasses that prevail on village ridges: a further reason that compels Nuer to occupy these sites in the rains. When rain ceases, the overcropped grasses on these ridges soon wither, while the rank grasses of the plains impede the movements of the herds and no longer provide good grazing. Therefore Nuer hasten to burn them as soon as they are dry, since some species

[p. 60 contains no textual material]

OECOLOGY

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The dry season movements of the Lou, the Eastern Jikany, and the Zeraf River tribes are shown on the sketch-maps accompanying this section. Of the Sobat tribes, the Lou stay inland as long as they can and in a wet year may remain inland throughout the dry season, falling back on the deeper pools, some large enough to be called lakes, e.g. Muot tot, Muot dit, Fading, Fadoi, Gwonggwong, Yollei, Tepjor, and Nyerol. If forced to leave them the Gun primary section moves north to the Sobat and south-west to the flooded plains of the Bahr el Zeraf in the country of the Twic Dinka, and the Mor primary section moves north-east to the Nyanding river and east to the Geni and Pibor. In the old days fighting frequently occurred if the Lou moved to these camping sites, because the banks of the Sobat were in the hands of the Balak Dinka while their occupation of the Geni and Pibor was disputed by the Anuak and Beir and their move to the south-west was trespass on Dinka grazing grounds. Even the lower reaches of the Nyanding do not belong to the Lou, but to the Gaajok. Therefore they probably only moved to these sites when absolutely necessary.

● [721]

The Eastern Jikany have not so much need to move as have the Lou. Nevertheless they all fall back on rivers or marshes before the drought is far advanced. The three primary sections of the Gaajok move as follows: the Laang concentrate on the Sobat, the Wangkac move south-east to the banks of the Pibor and Gila, and the Yol either camp near the junction of the Wokau and Sobat or northwards along the edges of the Machar swamp. The Gaagwang move to the western end of Khor Makwai. The Gaajak primary sections move as follows: the northern Thiang sections (Kang and Lony) go to the Daga river while the southern Thiang section (Tar) and the Reng, Nyayan, Wau, and Cany sections camp on the banks of the Baro, Jokau, Adura, and Makwei, mainly in Ethiopia.

The three Zeraf river tribes fall back on the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Zeraf and streams flowing into these two rivers, as shown in Mr. Lewis's sketch. The Gaawar who live on the left bank of the Zeraf can build their villages on high ground near that river and do not have to move far in the drought.

The Western Nuer mainly camp on inland streams which are no great distance from their villages. The Karlual primary section of the Leek tribe mostly concentrate first on the Loogh stream and afterwards on the Cal and Wangtac, all of which link up with the Bahr el Ghazal. The Dok camp near pools in the beds of inland streams. The Western Jikany move to the Jikany marshes at the edge of the Bahr el Ghazal. Without giving

7 [See pp 50, 58, 60 — analyst]

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136 231 178 [583] [628]

extensive, have been the social changes which have resulted from this disturbance of the oecological equilibrium. Since bride-wealth consists of cattle there must have been for a time considerable dislocation of marriage arrangements, but stability has been reached to-day by lowering the number of cattle which have to be paid. A like assessment on a new footing does not seem to have been achieved in homicide negotiations, in which there is not the same goodwill between the parties as in marriage, and blood-wealth appears to have been claimed up to the present time at the old rate of payment, though Nuer recognize that bride-wealth and blood-wealth should rise and fall together. One cannot make any precise statement on the matter, but it is likely that feuds were less easily concluded than before and that consequently tribal relations were affected. It may also be supposed that decrease in stock has led to a general deterioration of the standard of living, for climatic conditions do not allow adequate compensation by expending further labour on horticulture. No doubt Nuer grew more millet than before, but they must have suffered a decrease in their total food-supply and, above all, in security. It will be seen in a later section that Nuer can no more exist on a purely horticultural economy than they can, at any rate since the introduction of rinderpest, exist on a purely pastoral economy. They must have a mixed economy and can compensate on one side or the other only to a very limited degree. Nuer sought to repair their losses rather by extensive raiding of their Dinka neighbours, passing on to them their own losses in stock. We know that Nuer raided Dinka before rinderpest entered the country, but it is likely that their foreign relations have been affected by the greater stimulus to aggression. Other probable effects could be noted, especially in kinship relations, but one can only guess their importance, so we confine our speculations to a few of those that may be supposed to have occurred in Nuer economy and political life.

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It was noted in Chapter I that to exist Nuer have to make use of a mixed economy, since their herds do not supply them with adequate nourishment. It will be seen in a later section that their millet harvest is often meagre and uncertain. Fish,

221 Seasonal variation in quantity and kind of food is sociologically significant for several reasons, though not all are relevant to the present study. It is, however, important to note that abundance of millet is the main reason for holding ceremonies in the rains, for ritual is seldom complete without porridge and beer and, since it consists of sacrifice, of meat also. Weddings, initiation rites, and religious ceremonies of various kinds take place in the rains and early drought, generally after the first millet harvest. This is also the main season for raiding the Dinka. Nuer say that hunger and war are bad companions and that they are too hungry to fight in the full dry season; and it is evident that they are then not so eager to come to blows over personal and community quarrels as they are in the rainy months, when they are replete with grain and meat and, especially at wedding dances, sometimes slightly intoxicated. Nor do the young men find dancing so attractive in the drought, whereas in the rains they dance as much as possible and think nothing of travelling many miles to attend weddings, at which they dance from eventide till well into the morning. The tempo of village life is different from that of camp life. Owing to flooding at the height of the rains these joint activities take place mainly at the beginning and end—chiefly at the end —of the wet season.

264 574 Scarcity of food at times and the narrow margin that for most of the year divides sufficiency from famine cause a high degree of interdependence among members of the smaller local groups, which may be said to have a common stock of food. Although each household owns its own food, does its own cooking, and provides independently for the needs of its members, men, and much less, women and children, eat in one another's homes to such an extent that, looked at from outside, the whole community is seen to be partaking of a joint supply. Rules of hospitality and conventions about the division of meat and fish lead to a far wider sharing of food than a bare statement of the principles of ownership would suggest. Young men eat at all byres in the vicinity; every household gives beer parties which their neighbours and kinsmen attend; the sar e people are given food and beer at the co-operative work parties that assist in any difficult and laborious task; in camps it is

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object of their allegiance, their joking disparagement of other tribes, and their indication of cultural variations in their own tribe as symbols of its singularity. A man of one tribe sees the people of another tribe as an undifferentiated group to whom he has an undifferentiated pattern of behaviour, while he sees himself as a member of a segment of his own tribe. Thus when a Leek man says that So-and-so is a Nac (Rengyan) he at once defines his relationship to him. Tribal sentiment rests as much on opposition to other tribes as on common name, common territory, corporate action in warfare, and the common lineage structure of a dominant clan.

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How strong is tribal sentiment may be gathered from the fact that sometimes men who intend to leave the tribe of their birth to settle permanently in another tribe take with them some earth of their old country and drink it in a solution of water, slowly adding to each dose a greater amount of soil from their new country, thus gently breaking mystical ties with the old and building up mystical ties with the new. I was told that were a man to fail to do this he might die of *nueer*, the sanction that punishes breach of certain ritual obligations.

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A tribe is the largest group the members of which consider it their duty to combine for raiding and for defensive action. The younger men of the tribe went, till recently, on joint expeditions against the Dinka and waged war against other Nuer tribes. Wars between tribes were less frequent than attacks on the Dinka, but there are many examples in recent Nuer history of border disputes among tribes and even of one tribe raiding another for cattle, and such fighting is traditional among the Nuer. The Leek tribe raided the Jikany and Jagei tribes, and a Leek tribesman told me, 'The cattle with which my father married were Gee (Jagei) cattle.' Poncet remarks: 'Les Elliab (Dok) se battent avec les Egnan (Nuong) du sud et les Relan (Rengyan) du nord; les Ror de l'intérieur avec ces derniers et les Bior (Bor) de Gazal (Ghazal river). Toutes leurs querelles viennent des pâturages qu'ils se disputent, ce qui n'empêche pas qu'ils voyagent les uns chez les autres sans aucun danger, à moins cependant qu'on n'ait un parent à venger.'[1] In theory a tribe was regarded as a military unit, and if two sections of different tribes

[1] Op. cit., p. 39.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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619 721 were engaged in hostilities each could rely on the support of the other sections of the same tribe; but, in practice, they would often only join in if the other side was receiving assistance from neighbouring sections. When a tribe united for warfare there was a truce to disputes within its borders.

Tribes, especially the smaller ones, often united to raid foreigners. The Leek united with the Jagei and Western Jikany, and the Lou with the Gaawar to attack the Dinka; the Lou with the Eastern Jikany tribes to attack the Anuak; and so on. These military alliances between tribes, often under the aegis of a Sky-god, speaking through his prophet (p. 188), were of short duration, there was no moral obligation to form them, and, though action was concerted, each tribe fought separately under its own leaders and lived in separate camps in enemy country.

619 726 628 Fighting between Nuer of different tribes was of a different character from fighting between Nuer and Dinka. Inter-tribal fighting was considered fiercer and more perilous, but it was subject to certain conventions: women and children were not molested, huts and byres were not destroyed, and captives were not taken. Also, other Nuer were not considered natural prey, as were the Dinka.

619 681 Another defining characteristic of a tribe is that within it there is *cut*, blood-wealth paid in compensation for homicide, and Nuer explain the tribal value in terms of it. Thus Lou tribesmen say that among themselves there is blood-wealth, but not between themselves and the Gaajok or the Gaawar; and this is the invariable definition of tribal allegiance in every part of Nuerland. Between tribesmen there is also *ruok*, compensation for torts other than homicide, though the obligation to pay it is less generally stressed or carried out, while between one tribe and another no such obligation is acknowledged. We may therefore say that there is law, in the limited and relative sense defined in Chapter IV, between tribesmen, but no law between tribes. If a man commits an offence against a fellow tribesman he places himself and his kin in a legal position towards this man and his kin, and the hostile relations that ensue can be broken down by payment of cattle. If a man commits the same act against a man of another tribe no breach of law is recognized, no obligation is felt to settle the dispute, and there is no

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After recounting the myth of the cow and calf, he added, 'And to this day the Dinka has always lived by robbery, and the Nuer by war.'[1]

Fighting, like cattle husbandry, is one of the chief activities and dominant interests of all Nuer men, and raiding Dinka for cattle is one of their principal pastimes. Indeed *jaang*, Dinka, is sometimes used to refer to any tribe whom the Nuer habitually raid and from whom they take captives. Boys look forward to the day when they will be able to accompany their elders on these raids against the Dinka, and as soon as youths have been initiated into manhood they begin to plan an attack to enrich themselves and to establish their reputation as warriors. Every Nuer tribe raided Dinka at least every two or three years, and some part of Dinkaland must have been raided annually. Nuer have a proper contempt for Dinka and are derisive of their fighting qualities, saying that they show as little skill as courage. *Kur jaang*, fighting with Dinka, is considered so trifling a test of valour that it is not thought necessary to bear shields on a raid or to pay any regard to adverse odds, and is contrasted with the dangers of *kur Nath*, fighting between Nuer themselves. These boasts are justified both in the unflinching bravery of the Nuer and by their military success.

The earliest travellers record that Nuer held both banks of the Nile, but it is probable that the entire Zeraf Island was at one time occupied by Dinka and it is certain that the whole of the country from the Zeraf to the Pibor and, to the north of the Sobat, from the confines of Shillukland to the Ethiopian scarp was, with the exception of riverain settlements of Anuak, still in their hands as late as the middle of last century, when it was seized by the Nuer in two lines of expansion, to the north of the Sobat and to the south of it. This is known from the statements of both Nuer and Dinka, the evidence of genealogies and age-sets, and the records of travellers, who frequently refer to the struggle between the two peoples, the dominant position of the Nuer among their neighbours, the awe they inspired in them, and their bravery and chivalry.[2] The conquest, which seems to have resulted in absorp-

[1] *Sudan Intelligence Report*, no. 152, 1907.

[2] Werne, op. cit., p. 163; Abd-el-Hamid, op. cit., pp. 82–3; Philippe Terranuova D'Antonio, 'Relation d'un voyage au Fleuve Blanc', *Nouvelles annales des voyages*, Paris, 1859. Lejean, op. cit., p. 232; Poncet, op. cit., pp. 18, 26, 39, 41–2, and 44; Petherick, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 6; Heuglin, *Reise in das Gebiet*

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tion and miscegenation rather than extermination, was so rapid and successful that the whole of this vast area is to-day occupied by Nuer, except for a few pockets of Dinka on the Sobat, Filus, and Atar. Apart from these independent units there are many local communities in Eastern Nuerland of Nuer who acknowledge that they are of Dinka descent, and small lineages of Dinka origin are found in every village and camp. Some Dinka tribes took refuge with compatriots to the south, where the Gaawar and Lou continued to raid them. The Western Nuer likewise persistently raided all the Dinka tribes that border them, particularly those to the south and west, obtained a moral ascendency over them, and compelled them to withdraw farther and farther from their boundaries. To the west of the Nile, as to the east, Dinka captives were assimilated, and there are many small lineages of Dinka descent in every tribe and these are often preponderant in local communities. Of all the Dinka only the Ngok, to the south of the Sobat, were left in peace, probably on account of their poverty of stock and grazing, though their immunity has a mythological sanction. It seems also that the Atwot were not considered such legitimate prey as the Dinka on account of their Nuer origin, and it is probable that they were seldom molested as they are remotely situated.

The favourite season for raiding Dinka was at the end of the rains, though they were also invaded at their commencement. Leek tribesmen told me that when they raided Dinka to the south-west they used to sleep the first night near the villages of the Wot tribe and the second night in the bush. They took no food with them and ate only what fish they might hastily spear on the way, travelling with all speed throughout the day and part of the night. On the third day they attacked the Dinka villages or camps at dawn. The Dinka seldom put up any resistance, but loosened their cattle and tried to drive them away. No one seized cattle till the enemy had been dispersed. Then each took what prizes he could, often not troubling to tether his captures but slashing their rumps in sign of ownership. Afterwards the beasts were tied up

des Weissen Nil und seiner westlichen Zuflüsse in den Jahren 1862–1864, 1869, p. 104. Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa* (English translation), 1873, vol. i, pp. 118–19; Gaetano Casati, *Ten Years in Equatoria and the Return with Emin Pasha* (English translation), 1891, vol. i, p. 39; Romolo Gessi Pasha, *Seven Years in the Soudan* (English translation), 1892, p. 57. The maps intended by travellers to show the positions of the peoples of this area are rather vague and are not in entire agreement. The reader may consult those in Marno, op. cit., Poncet, op. cit., Heuglin, op. cit., the map compiled by Lejean from information supplied by the Poncet brothers in *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), 1860; the maps prepared by V. A. Malte-Brun in *Nouvelles annales des voyages*, 1855 and 1863, and others of this period.

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921 in the enemy's kraal, the oxen being mainly slaughtered for food. If the Dinka gathered reinforcements and returned to fight they were met in full battle formation. Nuer fight in three divisions with two or three hundred yards between each, and if one division is engaged the others advance or retreat parallel to it according to the fortunes of war. A party of scouts are in advance of the central division and they charge up to the enemy, hurl their spears at them, and fall back on the main body.

The raiders spent several weeks in Dinkaland and sometimes remained there throughout the dry season, living on the milk and flesh of captured cattle, on pillaged grain, and on fish. Using a captured kraal as a base they extended their raid against distant camps. Nuer migrations seem to have been conducted on these lines, the raiders settling permanently in Dinka country and by systematic raiding compelling the inhabitants to withdraw farther and farther from the points of occupation. In the following season a new series of raids was initiated and the process was repeated till the Dinka were compelled to seek refuge with their kinsfolk of another tribe and leave their country to its invaders. If settlement was not contemplated, however, the raiders returned home when they considered that they had sufficient booty.

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727 Before camp was broken up there took place a custom highly indicative of Nuer sense of equality and justice. It was recognized that the whole force was jointly responsible for the success of the raid and there was therefore a redistribution of the booty. The [192] prophet whose revelations sanctioned the raid first made a round of the camp and selected from each household a cow for the divine spirit of whom he was the mouthpiece. By this time a household possessed some fifty head, so that it was no hardship to be asked to give one to the spirit. There then took place a general scramble and everybody rushed amid the herd to earmark beasts for himself. A man who could first seize an animal, tether it, and cut its ear had absolute claim to it. The man who originally captured a cow had the advantage that it was tethered near his windscreen, but if he and members of his household had an undue share of the booty they could not earmark all the beasts before they were seized by others. As might be supposed, men frequently sustained injury in these scrambles, for if two men seized the same cow they fought with clubs for possession of it. One must not use the spear on these occasions. Men of neighbouring camps took part in one another's redistributions and there must have been great confusion. Captives, women of marriageable age, boys, and girls, were not redistributed but belonged to their original captor. Older women and babies were clubbed and, when the raid was on a village, their

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In larger groups than a village and camp there is for less 554

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co-ordination of activities and less scope for leadership. Only in war is there any lengthy direct co-operation. Men noted for their prowess and ability stir up among the youths enthusiasm for a raid against the Dinka or a fight against another tribal section, and direct what simple tactics are employed, but these men have no political status or permanent leadership. The warriors mobilize in local divisions of their own accord, for there are no regiments and companies under officers, and in fighting they follow the most forward and courageous among them. Some of these warriors become renowned and their reputation quickly attracts recruits for raids. Two of the most famous war leaders were Latjor who led the Jikany tribes, and Bidiit who led the Lou, eastwards. Neither had any ritual qualifications, but both were men of outstanding ability who were members of the dominant clans of their tribes. It is not said by Nuer that either established any political control, or even had great authority, in their tribes. The role of prophets in war is examined later. Between tribal segments there are no other joint activities that require organization and direction.

XII

The lack of governmental organs among the Nuer, the absence of legal institutions, of developed leadership, and, generally, of organized political life is remarkable. Their state is an acephalous kinship state and it is only by a study of the kinship system that it can be well understood how order is maintained and social relations over wide areas are established and kept up. The ordered anarchy in which they live accords well with their character, for it is impossible to live among Nuer and conceive of rulers ruling over them. 181 156

The Nuer is a product of hard and egalitarian upbringing, is deeply democratic, and is easily roused to violence. His turbulent spirit finds any restraint irksome and no man recognizes a superior. Wealth makes no difference. A man with many cattle is envied, but not treated differently from a man with few cattle. Birth makes no difference. A man may not be a member of the dominant clan of his tribe, he may even be of Dinka descent, but were another to allude to the fact he would run a grave risk of being clubbed.

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792 619 their tribal position has been misunderstood. The earliest Government officials to enter Lou country have recorded that Ngundeng was greatly feared and respected and were of the opinion that if the Lou were to be administered he would have either to be reconciled or removed. However, his son, Gwek, was not supported against the Government by some sections of the tribe. Mr. Struvé, then Governor of the Upper Nile Province, reported that Dwal, son of Diu, had 'rather shaky authority' among the Gaawar. I received the impression in 1932 that Buom had far more power in Dok country as a government chief than he ever had in pre-government days as a prophet. A prophet's curse is feared, but armed intervention of Government forces is a weightier sanction. Buom was attempting to exercise unprecedented judicial functions and his banishment met with no popular hostility and with little regret. There is no good evidence that the earlier prophets were more than spiritual persons, whose ritual powers were used particularly in warfare, though some of the later ones appear to have begun to settle disputes, at any rate in their own villages and districts. Of them all, perhaps Gwek came nearest to exercising political functions and to imposing his authority outside his own district, but the hostility between tribes and between tribal segments rendered effective personal control impossible.

792 721 619 The only activities of prophets which can truly be called tribal were their initiation of raids against the Dinka and their rallying of opposition to Arab and European aggression, and it is in these actions that we see their structural significance and account for their emergence and the growth of their influence. All the important prophets about whom we have information gained their prestige by directing successful raids on the Dinka, for these raids were carried out in the names of the spirits which promised rich booty by their lips. No extensive raids were undertaken without the permission and guidance of prophets, who received instructions from the Sky-gods in dreams and trances about the time and objective of attack, and often they accompanied them in person and performed sacrifices before battle. They took for themselves part of the spoil and to some extent supervised the division of the rest of it. The warriors sang war hymns to the Sky-gods before starting on raids and the

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sacrifices to them by their prophets were believed to ensure booty and safety.

For the first time a single person symbolized, if only to a moderate degree and in a mainly spiritual and uninstitutionalized form, the unity of a tribe, for prophets are tribal figures. But they have a further significance, for their influence extended over tribal boundaries. Gwek had great influence in Gaajok, and it is said that because of it the Lou and the Gaajok for a time paid compensation for homicide between them. His influence reached as far as the Eastern Gaagwang and Gaajak. Dengleaka had a similar influence in the valley of the Zeraf, especially among the Thiang. Some of the Western Nuer prophets had a reputation among a number of neighbouring tribes which united for raids at the direction of their spirits. They were not a mechanism of tribal structure like leopard-skin chiefs, but were pivots of federation between adjacent tribes and personified the structural principle of opposition in its widest expression, the unity and homogeneity of Nuer against foreigners. Probably, the coalition of tribes and the organization of joint raids is very largely their achievement—though one cannot be sure of this in the absence of historical records—and has made them important and powerful figures in Nuerland. This interpretation explains how it is that prophets began half a century ago, or at any rate came to the fore then. Certain structural changes were taking place in response to changed conditions: the development of functions that were more purely political than any exercised by individuals before and of a greater degree of unity among neighbouring tribes than there had been hitherto. As Sky-gods passed at the death of prophets into their sons we are further justified in suggesting growth of hereditary political leadership which, with the strong tendency towards federation between adjacent tribes we attribute to the new Arab-European menace. Opposition between Nuer and their neighbours had always been sectional. They were now confronted by a more formidable and a common enemy. When the Government crushed the prophets this tendency was checked. As we understand the situation, the prophets were inevitably opposed to the Government because it was this opposition among the people which led to their emergence and was personified in them.

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West, they are often made by streams for fishing. When the second harvest is reaped the cattle are brought back to the village to eat the millet stalks, if the camps are near. As pools dry up, or pasturage is exhausted, or the fishing becomes poor, the young men make new camps and several intermediate camps may be made before they move to their large annual camping grounds at the side of lakes or marshes or on river banks. The early camps are often small, being manned by a few kinsmen but tend to get larger as the season continues and water becomes scarcer. The final camps may contain several hundred persons. By the middle of January the villages in the Lou country are deserted but in areas more favoured with water supplies, for example in Lek country, some of the older people may still be in the villages in the middle of February.

The Lou people stay inland as long as they can and in a wet year may remain inland throughout the dry season. They fall back on the deeper pools, some large enough to be called lakes, which hold up the water in a stream or depression, *e.g.*, at Muŏt tŏt, Muot dit, Fading, Fadoi, Gwonggwong, Yollei, Tepjor and Nyerol. These pools supply them with abundant fish. If forced to leave them the Gun major tribal section moves north to the Sobat and south-west to the flooded plain of the Bahr el Zeraf in the country of the Twic Dinka (*toc Twini*) and the Mor major tribal section moves northeast to the Nyanding river or East to the Geni and Pibor rivers.

•[721]

In the old days fighting frequently occurred if the Lou moved to these camping sites because the banks of the Sobat belonged to the Balak people, while occupation of the Geni and Pibor brought them into contact with the Beir and Anuak peoples, and their move to the south-west was trespass on Dinka grazing grounds. Even the lower reaches of the Nyanding river do not belong to the Lou for the Gaajok have their villages along it and have fishing rights in its pools.

The Madjok villagers with whom I camped for several months at Yakwac in 1931 had moved to Pul Telă for an intermediate camp early in December and had reached Yakwac about the middle of

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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from a man who has seduced his wife because six head of cattle is the accepted scale of compensation for adultery. Having acquired the cattle, he is in a better position to negotiate his terms with their owner. In some cases he may take more than his recognized due, for this will give him an extra lever to get the matter settled, but in most cases he will wish to settle the matter amicably so that he does not run the risk of having them stolen back from him. Some compromise will be reached. In many cases, provided the culprit has reasonable customary grounds for his action, i.e. if he has right (*cuong*) on his side, the owner of the cattle will not bother to resist and will readily agree to negotiate through some mediator, so that the transfer of the cattle may be socially recognized and not lead to blows between them. Moreover the closer the relationship between the man who takes the cattle and the owner, the more likely will it be that the former will have some legal justification for taking them. The expression, *ce yang-da kwal*, so common among Nuer, usually means that someone has seized the speaker's cattle in (according to the speaker) the mistaken opinion that he had a definite right to them.

Frequently the culprit knows that he has only a very thin excuse for taking them, and often removes himself and the cattle to some distance where the owner can get legal satisfaction only with difficulty, for whereas in his own community opinion will be against him, the people with whom he takes refuge are not interested and do not know the full implications of the case. If the injured party agrees that the culprit has a right to the cattle, peaceable negotiations will follow; if he does not, disputes may result between them which may or may not lead to blows. According to Professor Evans-Pritchard, a man will never steal a cow from a fellow tribesman merely because he wants one.

He has, on the other hand, no hesitation in stealing cows from persons belonging to neighbouring tribes and will even go with friends to another tribe in order to steal from them. This theft (*kwal*) is not considered in any way wrong.[1]

This really comes under the heading of cattle-raiding, and depends on the current relations between tribes. If, as frequently happened in the past, tribes were technically at war with each other, then such cattle-raiding was considered a legitimate move in the course of war. Moreover, if a blood-feud existed and homicide cases remained unsettled, the seizure of cattle might have some legal justification behind it. Nuer tribes were not, however, always hostile, and the tribal boundaries did not imply such a rigid line of demarcation as to pre-

[1] Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, p. 165. I quote this passage because it refers to conditions some twenty years ago when cattle raids were more common and, since legal remedies through the courts were less effective than they are nowadays, 'self-help' was not unusual.

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clude social relations and intermarriage. Moreover, a legal mechanism under the control of Leopard-Skin Chiefs existed whereby a state of war could be brought to an end when both sides were heartily sick of the endless danger and insecurity which such major feuds entailed. There are instances quoted in Nuer tribal history when these matters were settled, and though compensation for homicide was usually waived because of the large number of persons for whom compensation would be demanded on both sides, the illicit seizure of cattle was often assessed in the final count.

Therefore the seizure of cattle without legal justification, real or supposed, within a tribal community was extremely rare, and the stealing of cattle from other tribes was really an act of war. Raiding the Dinka, a legitimate Nuer prey, was something different. It was, however, extremely common for Nuer to 'take the law into their own hands' and wrest what they considered their just dues from their debtors without bothering to arrange peaceful negotiations through some mediator or, later, through the medium of established courts. In most cases this action was taken only if the defendant in the case was unwilling to negotiate. These observations apply largely to the past when no courts existed, or when they had not yet developed present standards of efficiency and effectiveness. Nevertheless Nuer still often seize cattle which they consider their just due.

Theft of Cattle

There are certain specific situations which fall within the true definition of theft: when cattle are taken or material possessions misappropriated without any real or supposed reason other than that the thief covets them. It has been mentioned that the word *kwal* applies generally to all situations when the rightful or wrongful seizure of stock or material objects takes place. There is a specific term in the Nuer vocabulary which is applied when stock or personal possessions are taken for no apparent reason other than that the thief wants them. That such a word exists at all and is used to describe these circumstances is evidence of the distinction. This word is *wuan*:[1] a man will say *ce yang-da wuan* or *ce yoka wuan*, 'he has stolen my cow', 'he has stolen my money', and in using this expression he implies that the culprit did so for no accepted reason.

Cases where a man steals cattle from his neighbours merely because he covets them are rare. He would not be able to hide the theft unless

[1] Two other words are worth mentioning here. The word *pec* is used to describe situations where superior force is used, e.g. when cattle are raided by a more powerful group from a weaker one and, nowadays, when the Government or local authorities seize cattle by force. The word *mac*, which also means theft or misappropriation, implies deprivation by fraud or cunning, i.e. swindling. *Wuan* also implies stealth or cunning.

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and thrusts it into the river alongside the pole, calling upon the crocodiles to desist. This is, in fact, a common practice, since some Nuer are bound to cross rivers or crocodile-infested waterways in the course of the dry season migration.

Kuaar juath

The badge of this office is a cow-skin which he beats with a stick, and by performing this and other forms of ritual the *kuaar juath* stops the spread of disease among humans (notably small-pox). This office is also hereditary.

Kuaar yiika

The badge of this office is the *yiik* or woman's mat. The *kuaar yiika* is called in to arbitrate in cases where a woman dies in childbirth and *thung yiika* is demanded. Some Leopard-Skin families claim that this is their duty and that the *kuaar yiika* is only an assistant who should help in a subordinate capacity.

Gwan tang (*sometimes kuaar tang*)[1]

The word *tang* means 'spear-shaft'. The *gwan tang* is particularly concerned with the success of raiding parties and the performance of elaborate ritual to avoid spear-wounds to the warriors. Part of the ritual process is to break off the tip of the spear-shaft and cast it in the direction of the enemy. Some of these specialists are known as *gwan bith* (*bith* means fish-spear), but I know of only one family which claims this distinction, and their functions and the ritual they perform appear to be identical with those of the *gwan tang*.

Many of the functions of these various experts appear to overlap. This is true in general terms, but closer analysis will, I think, show that they are not identical. Thus the *kuaar kwac*, the *wut ghok*, the *kuaar thoi* and the *gwan tang* are all concerned with cattle raids and warfare. The *kuaar kwac*, however, is expected to ensure success in a more general and unspecified way, the *wut ghok* has specifically the duty of seeing that the raiders are successful in capturing cattle, the *kuaar thoi* is expected to protect them from poisoned water, and the *gwan tang* to give them success in inflicting spear-wounds on their enemies and in avoiding injuries to themselves. The *kuaar kwac* is also expected to protect them against the ghosts of slain enemies, which is one of his specific duties in cases of homicide. All experts of this kind are known as owners of *twac* (*gwan twac—ji twac*),[2] stressing their right to wear a particular skin as a badge of office, although some of them, notably the *wut ghok*, have none; the rest of the

[1] *Kuaar* is best translated as 'expert', though the word 'chief' is more often used; *gwan* (father) here simply means 'owner or possessor of'.

[2] *Twac* is a generic term for skin: *kwac* means leopard-skin, *thoan* serval cat-skin, and so on.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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people who have no such distinction are known as *dwek*. There is no suggestion of a caste system or, indeed, any social distinction, but only of the possession of a special ritual status in society which is emphasized by the hereditary nature of their functions and in tribal tradition and mythology.

I do not propose here to discuss in great detail the part played by these experts in legal procedures. We have already seen that the *kuaar kwac* or *kuaar muon* had special functions to perform as a mediator in blood-feuds and in other forms of dispute. The *kuaar yiika*, though his functions were almost purely ritual, was called in when an unmarried woman died in childbirth as a result of illicit sexual intercourse. Yet it would not be true to say that the *wut ghok* intervened in disputes concerning cattle for his functions were entirely ritual. This applies also to other kinds of religious functionary and, as will be seen later, magical experts of other categories. It is, however, true to say that any man of influence would intervene in disputes, both between individuals and between lineages or tribal segments, and since possession of spiritual attributes brings influence of this sort, doubtless such experts played their part in political and legal affairs. Again, it is necessary to stress that these observations, though still partially true, concern principally the past. It will be obvious that whatever political and legal functions were performed by these people in the old days are now much modified by the introduction of modern tribunals with the sanction of government action behind them.

Other Types of Religious Expert

Religious experts of the second category have no analogous traditional status or specialization of social and economic function, although in most cases their position becomes hereditary. These are the *ji kuthni* (sing. *gwan kwoth*), of which there are many kinds. The first are the possessors of 'sky-spirits'—direct and identified manifestations of *kwoth*—some of whom gained considerable political power and widespread fame during the last century. Professor Evans-Pritchard speaks of these as 'Prophets', and suggests that the concept was of Dinka origin. Many of these prophets were themselves of Dinka extraction.

It must be remembered that the great majority of these people gained no widespread prestige and had no political influence at all, their activities being limited to the ordinary ritual divination and diagnosis of the cause of the minor misfortunes which beset the individual. Nowadays they are unlikely to gain any extensive political power, although there are many who have exceptional influence over the Nuer, and it is interesting to note that they are never brought forward as possible representatives of the people to the Government. For example, there is a *gwan kwoth* called Macar Teng, who lives in comparative

10:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931-1936) 1940
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persons concerned. Nevertheless, so long as a sense of community endures and the legal norm is formally acknowledged within a tribe, whatever may be the inconsistencies and contradictions that appear in the actual relations between tribesmen, they still consider themselves to be a united group. Then either the contradiction of feuds is felt and they are settled, the unity of the tribe being maintained thereby, or they remain so long unsettled that people give up all hope and intention of ever concluding them and finally cease to feel that they ought to be concluded, so that the tribe tends to split and two new tribes come into being.

Nor must it be supposed that the political limits of the tribe are the limits of social intercourse. People move freely all over Nuerland and are unmolested if they have not incurred blood-guilt. They marry and, to a small extent, trade across tribal boundaries, and pay visits to kinsmen living outside their own tribe. Many social relations, which are not specifically political, link members of different tribes. One has only to mention that the same clans are found in different tribes and that everywhere the age-sets are co-ordinated. Any Nuer may leave his tribe and settle in a new tribe, of which he thereby becomes a member. In time of peace, even Dinka foreigners may visit Nuerland unharmed. Moreover, we must recognize that the whole Nuer people form a single community, territorially unbroken, with common culture and feeling of exclusiveness. Their common language and values permit ready inter-communication. Indeed, we might speak of the Nuer as a nation, though only in a cultural sense, for there is no common political organization or central administration.

Besides being the largest group in which legal obligation is acknowledged, a tribe is also the largest group which habitually combines for offence and defence. The younger men of the tribe went, till recently, on joint raiding expeditions against the Dinka and waged war against other Nuer tribes. Raids on the Dinka were very frequent; war between tribes less so. In theory, if two sections of different tribes were engaged in hostilities, each could rely on the support of the other sections of the same tribe, but in practice they did not always join in. Contiguous tribes sometimes combined against foreigners, especially against the Dinka, though there was no moral obligation to do so, the alliance was of short duration, and the allies conducted their operations independently, even when in collaboration.

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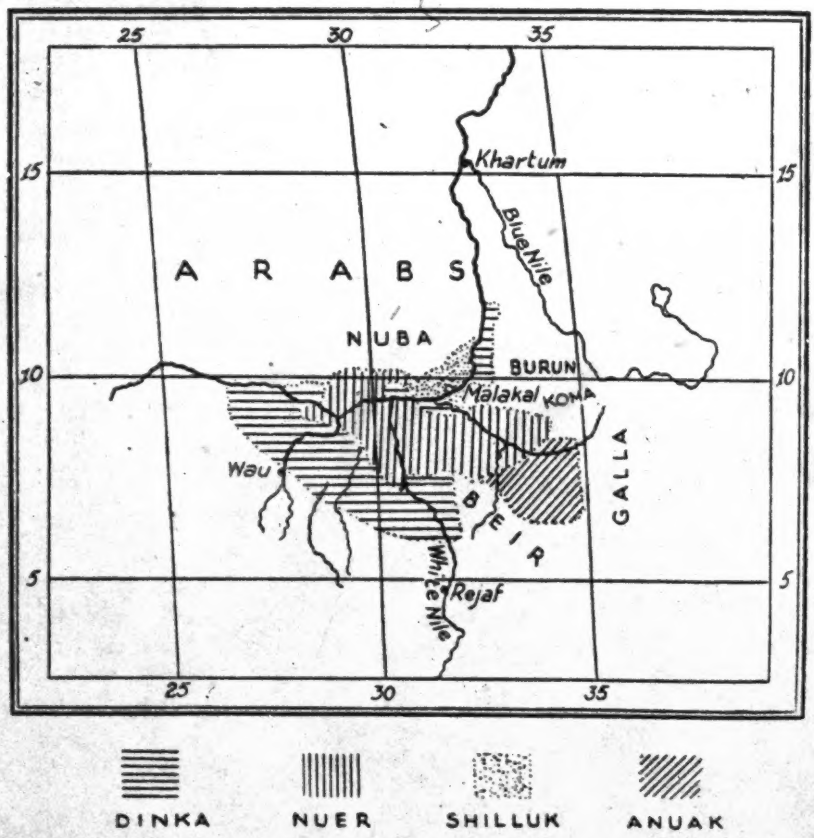
At the present time, Nuer are to the west and south bordered by Dinka, who appear to have very much the same kind of political system as their own, i.e. they comprise a congeries of tribes without centralized government. From the earliest times the Nuer have been fighting the Dinka and have been generally on the



offensive. We know that during the first half of the last century waves of Nuer broke from their homeland to the west of the Nile on to the Dinka lands to the east of that river and that they conquered and absorbed the inhabitants in most of what is now eastern Nuerland (the Nuer distinguish between *Nath cieng*, the 'homeland', or western Nuer, and *Nath doar*, the 'migrated', or eastern Nuer). Fighting between the two peoples has continued till the present time but there does not appear, if maps made by early

10:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931-1936) 1940
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travellers are to be trusted, to have been much change of territory during the last fifty years. This eastwards migration is a fact that has to be taken into account, with those related earlier, if we wish to know why the eastern tribes are larger, territorially and numerically, than the western tribes, for it may be assumed that the struggle of conquest and settlement, and absorption of Dinka on an unprecedented scale, had some effect on the migrating hordes.

To the north, the Nuer are in varying degrees of contact with Arabs, the peoples of the Nuba Hills, the powerful Shilluk kingdom, and certain small communities in Darfung (Burun and Koma); while to the east and south-east they are bordered by the Galla of Ethiopia, the Anuak, and the Beir. Wherever the Nuer have direct relations with these peoples, they are hostile in character.

Arab slave-raiders from the Northern Sudan intruded here and there into the more accessible portions of Nuerland in the second half of the nineteenth century, but nowhere did they gain the upper hand or, indeed, make a marked impression on the Nuer, who opposed them as strongly as they resisted later the Egyptian Government, which undertook no serious operations against them. The Nuer likewise treated British rule with open disrespect till, as a result of lengthy military operations between 1928 and 1930, their opposition was broken and they were brought under effective administration. With the exception of this last episode in their history, the Nuer may be said to have reached in their foreign relations a state of equilibrium and of mutual hostility which was expressed from time to time in fighting.

A tribe is divided into territorial segments which regard themselves as separate communities. We refer to the divisions of a tribe as primary, secondary, and tertiary tribal sections. Primary sections are segments of a tribe, secondary sections are segments of a primary section, and tertiary sections are segments of a secondary section. A tertiary section is divided into villages and villages into domestic groups. A member of Z^2 tertiary division of tribe B sees himself as a member of Z^2 community in relation to Z^1, but he regards himself as a member of Y^2 and not of Z^2 in relation to Y^1. Likewise, he regards himself as a member of Y, and not of Y^2, in relation to X. He regards himself as a member of tribe B, and not of its primary section Y, in relation to tribe A. Thus, on a structural plane, there is always contradiction in the definition of a political group, for a man is a member of it in virtue

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619 and Gaawär or between Lou and Gaajok. In Gaajok country I was
621 also repeatedly informed that there was *cut* between all Gaajok tribesmen,
682 but no *cut* between them and Gaagwang or Gaajak tribesmen. It is
628 true that tribes are not water-tight compartments. People moved all
[581] over Nuerland with remarkable freedom and there are strong social bonds
[614] uniting people with members of tribes other than their own, particularly the bonds of marriage (there has always been interchange of daughters between Lou and Gaajok, for instance) and the bonds of clanship (the dominant elements in Gaajok and Gaajak tribes, for example, belong to the same clan since they are all descended from the same ancestor, Kir. Also lineages of the same clan are scattered far and wide among a dozen different tribes, but still recognise their kinship in spite of their territorial disintegration). Nevertheless, the declarations of Nuer on this point must have some significance, and I consider it well to record my own impressions from their verbal statements, together with Mr. Coriat's criticism. The point is important, but not overwhelmingly
619 so. What is of greater significance is that each tribe has its own tribal
624 officials who regulate disputes among tribesmen in so far as their ritual functions allow them to do so. The Lou leopard-skin chiefs regulate disputes among Lou tribesmen and Gaajok leopard-skin chiefs regulate disputes among Gaajok tribesmen. In virtue of his sacred character a leopard-skin chief (or land expert) can perform his ritual functions irrespective of tribal boundaries, but in the nature of things one does not summon a leopard-skin chief from Gaajok country to function in Lou country, but each district of Lou country has its regular experts who perform whatever services are required of them by fellow tribesmen of their section.

619 (4) Tribesmen unite for defensive and offensive warfare against
721 other tribes and segments of other nations. Messengers summoned
648 Lou tribesmen from all over the tribal area for a combined raid on the Dinka and those who wished to take part in the raid answered the summons. In such expeditions there was a truce to disputes within the tribe itself and temporary tribal solidarity was attained. Mr. Coriat points out to me, with some justice, that "it is incorrect to state that the tribe is the largest political unit within the nation. Their history can show many instances where two or more tribes have combined in common offence and defence. As an example, Lou and Jekany against the Anuak,

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619 Garweir and Lou against the Dinka. In fact, the tribes combined in
721 their first conquests of the Dinka." I was aware of these combinations,
648 but I preferred to regard them as alliances between two political units. In the same way in Europe, nations, the largest political units of our culture, combine together for purposes of warfare, but they do not lose their political autonomy by doing so. The comparison goes no further. Here again I wish to make it clear that I do not regard Nuer tribes as cohesive, clearly defined, water-tight, political groups. They are surely not. There are constant feuds between segments of the same tribe; there is constant marriage, fraternisation, and recognition of common kinship, between members of different tribes. Moreover, the tribe, as is explained more fully later, comprises within its boundaries a number of fairly cohesive segments cut off from each other territorially and these segments are united to one another by slender links which frequently snap so that new tribes are formed by fission. When tribes allied for warfare, each organised itself separately, so far as I could gather. Thus, when Lou united with Gaajok and Gaajak each organised its fighting force under its own leaders and magicians.

619 In my opinion, the Nuer tribes may be said to have had these political functions even if they carried them out very inadequately, and it is in this belief that I have spoken of the Lou as a tribe which includes two primary sections, the Gun and the Mor, but I have classed the eastern Gaajok, Gaajak, and Gaagwang as three separate tribes rather than as three sections of a Jekany tribe. I admit that the Nuer tribes did not carry out their functions in the clear-cut manner which we find among the tribes of many other African nations, e.g., the Azande. The Nuer tribe is a very fluid affair. It is not a constant and static group, but it is variable and dynamic. The way in which it has segmented is sufficient evidence of this. Fission takes place as a result of slow but continual social changes, the tendency being always that as the tribe gets larger it loses solidarity accordingly, so that it is not always possible to say with certainty when a tribe, in the sense in which I have used the term, is a single tribe with two moieties or whether it would not be more correct to speak of two separate tribes. I do not want to be guilty of the despicable offence of word-polishing. Those who wish to speak of the Gun and Mor moieties of the Lou tribe as two tribes or of the Gaajok and Gaajak tribes as two primary sections of one Jekany tribe are free to do so.

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619 follows (*see* diagram No. II). Leng tertiary tribal section may fight Nyark-
631 wac tertiary tribal section, and in fact there has been a long feud between
628 the two, but, in theory, according to my informants, if there is a row between Gaatbal secondary tribal section and Rumjok secondary tribal section, Leng and Nyarkwac will unite against the common enemy Rumjok which recruits from the several segments into which it is divided. On the other hand, if there is a fight between the Mor and Gun primary tribal sections, Rumjok and Gaatbal will unite against the combined Mor sections of Gaaliek, Jemac, and Jaajoah. This division of forces is based on the double principle of social cohesion, territorial contiguity and kinship. The Mor sections all live in one part of Lou country and the Gun sections all live in another part of Lou country (*see* sketch map No. III). The dominant lineages of the Mor sections are related closely to each other, while the dominant lineages of the Gun sections are also on their side closely related. However, I was told that in a row of this kind between Gun and Mor primary sections every effort would be made to turn the combat into a harmless armed demonstration (like so much of Nuer combativeness) rather than a regular pitched battle. My informants said that if no one were killed in the preliminary skirmishes the older men would get together and arrange for compensation to be paid for the offence which occasioned the rupture—generally a dispute about the ownership of cattle.

619 When a raid into Dinka country was organised Mor and Gun would
●721 both contribute warriors to the expedition, since both sections belong to the same tribe and since their dominant lineages are united by kinship bonds.

619 A similar principle was supposed to operate among the Jekany (*see*
628 diagram No. III). Thus Minyääl, Wang and Nyathuol would combine
631 against Yol. Also Thiur, Dwong and Kwith sections would unite for purposes of warfare. The primary tribal sections were frequently at strife with one another, and in these feuds we again see how closeness of contiguity and kinship are the deciding factors in the combinations. Thus my informants said that Wangkac and Yol will unite for war against another section since the ancestors of the dominant lineages of both sections were sons of the same mother (Nyalieth, wife of Ken, son of Majok). According to this principle Wangkac, Laang and Yol ought to combine against the Gaajak tribe.

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JINACA, one finds many members of such clans as the JIMEM, JUAK, KIEK, KWERMOANG, in every section. These clans have no longer a *wec* (a home) of their own. Thus there is a story that the JIMEM once had a big *wec* but when some of them were absent their food was eaten by their brothers. This led to a quarrel, which resulted in the dispersal of the clan, and now, like the other clans mentioned above, they have no central homeland. There is, however, said to be a small JIMEM pocket near Lek country.

In the migration of the Nuer eastwards across the Nile there does not appear to have been any systematic colonisation, if we except the Jekany occupation of Dinkaland. Parties of warriors would raid the nearest Dinka homesteads and carry off their boys and girls and cattle. These warriors at first returned home with their spoil but later a portion of them settled down with their wives and families and built homesteads to the east of the Nile, where they were still in touch with their relatives across the river. Slowly there was a drift further and further eastwards, and whilst the bulk of the conquering warriors belonged to one clan originally there followed a steady infiltration from other clans whose members attached themselves to the original conquerors and settled among them. Also it must be presumed that before the Nuer crossed the Nile and conquered the Dinka country, which lay to the east of that river, some clans were already nuclei of political aggregation from other clans and from Dinka not unlike the aggregations which we find of the west bank of the Nile to-day. At the present time, moreover, families move freely about the country and attach themselves to new local groups into which they marry. Especially does this seem to be the case among the Western Nuer where there is a perfect jumble of small clan lineages. The link between newcomers and the lineages among which they settle is not so much the link of marriage as of descent, since the birth of a child unites the two families of husband and wife by a genealogical link and the sons of the wife become children of the husband's lineage and sister's children of the wife's lineage.

The manner in which lineages split up was well described to me by a Dok man. Members of a lineage give birth to children and they become numerous and spread over the countryside, wandering here and there and everywhere (*cike dak piny*). Then their close relationship (*mar*) ends (*ci mar thuk*). They go and live in the midst of other clans who are

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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Chapter Nine

WIDER RELATIONS AND INFLUENCES

THE NUER AS NEIGHBOURS

NUER living along the borders of Nuerland raid the neighbouring tribes and are raided by them, taking cattle. In the past they have taken people, but I do not believe that is done now to any large extent. 721

A number of Nuer have Dinka 'slaves' or servants, who have been taken in these raids, but they are usually treated as members of the family, except that the Nuer son or daughter takes precedence over the captive Dinka in being allowed to be married first. The Nuer name for Dinka means slave, and they consider them as an inferior tribe. [567]

The Nuer sees nothing wrong in these border raids, but rather delights in the fact that it gives him a chance to show his prowess over his neighbour.

Sometimes one Nuer village raids another Nuer village, and this starts a feud that is hard to quell. It may last over several years. If some one is killed retaliation is sought. A life for a life is generally the rule.

Government interference is usually necessary to settle any large raid or incessant raiding.

Nuer wars and troubles between villages and different tribes are usually the result of cattle raids or the infringement of Nuer marriage customs.

In case two neighbouring villages are at war, especially if they be Nuer and Anuak, each assembles all their people and adherents. A war-dance and song are staged for the benefit of the opposite side, so that they may be impressed with the large number and possible prowess of their opponents. 726

[p. 71]

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dry season, and as this was unusual it had occasioned much comment among the Nuer. When they heard of his death a number of them at once assigned that fact as the cause of these rains.

In December 1927 there was a total eclipse of the moon which caused much alarm among the Nuer. They felt sure that it meant destruction to them and to their country, for was it not dripping blood? Later on, when the patrol was put on in part of Nuerland, they felt that it was just the fulfilment of what they had foreseen when the moon was in eclipse.

There is a saying among the Nuer that when they have plenty to eat they want to fight. That year, too, had seen a good harvest, and fight they did. There seemed to be many personal scores and old feuds that must be attended to that year, and then they declared it was all because the moon had predicted a year of trouble for them.

Not many Nuer have any conception of a country besides their own and the land occupied by a neighbouring tribe. They recognize their chief and his authority, but do not seem to realize their need of a larger, higher governing power.

Their acquaintance with this higher authority is limited. They see their cattle taken for taxes, they usually are willing to bring their difficulties to the District Commissioner to be settled; they are willing to be relieved of their physical ailments to some extent, and usually welcome the Government doctor and his trained assistants whom he sends out during the dry season.

The Nuer does not—or says he does not—see any good in paying taxes. Some of them feel that giving their cattle up for taxes is submitting without protest to a raid from a representative of another country, and they feel that if the Government can collect taxes (or raid their

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refuge among the Western Dinka to avoid the Arab slave raids and, later, the conflict between the Dinka and Azande. They are rapidly being absorbed by the Dinka and are consequently losing their Jo Luo customs and dialect. They are said to number 1,000 - 2,000 souls approximately.

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NEIGHBOURS

The neighbours of the Dinka include the Nuer. There has been conflict between the two for a long time and relations have been predominently warlike and marked by interminable cattle raiding. In the north east the Dinka are in contact with the Shilluk while, in the south west, in the Bahr el Ghazal province, there is the confusion of tribes in the neighbourhood of Wau. Among the Wau district tribes there is the Nilotic Jo Luo (Jur) who have been in immediate contact with their Dinka neighbours for a number of generations and have been subordinate to them to a certain extent.

POPULATION

Total population has been estimated at 500,000 souls approximately.

NOMENCLATURE

The Dinka name for themselves is *Jien*. Dinka is believed to be the anglicised form of the Arabic *Denkawi*, from *Jien*.

THE NUER

LOCATION

131
619

The Nuer inhabit the savannah stretching on both sides of the Nile south of its junction with the Sobat and Bahr el Ghazal rivers and on both banks of the two tributaries. The Nile divides the Nuer country into two parts, Eastern and Western Nuerland. According to Evans-Pritchard the most important tribal groups of the Western Nuer are: the Bul, Jagei, Lek, Nuong and Dok. The most important tribes of the Eastern Nuer are: the Thiang, Lak, Gaweir and Lou.(1) The Jekany tribes are found on the west bank of the Nile and also far to the east of the Sobat river where they extend over the Anglo-Egyptian border into Abyssinia.

NEIGHBOURS

721●

The western parts of Nuerland are in direct contact, and usually conflict, with their Dinka neighbours. Nuer expansion has been at the expense of their Dinka neighbours and it is generally recognised that much of present day Nuer country was Dinka in the middle of the 19th century. Relations between Nuer and Dinka will be discussed in the account of the Nuer political structure. The Shilluk are separated from the Nuer by the Dinka, except in a small area, and there has been little contact between the two groups, perhaps owing to the more highly organised society of the Shilluk which renders them difficult to raid with impunity. The Nuer give the

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.8 (map).

721 reason that the Shilluk have no cattle and they only raid people with cattle.(1) Although in direct contact with the Anuak in the far eastern parts of Nuer territory, tsetse fly and absence of cattle make the area unsuitable for encroachment and the Anuak were only occasionally raided by the Nuer. When rifles were introduced and the Anuak could defend themselves they retaliated with raids on the Nuer. The Burun were occasionally raided by the Nuer for captives. Other communities, Arab and those of the Nuba mountains, were raided only occasionally. Except for the 829 Beir whom the Nuer appear to have respected, and the Dinka whom they fought, most foreign peoples were classed by the Nuer as *Bur*, that is, cattle-less folk, or people possessing few cattle. Another category was *Jur*, cattle-less people whom the Nuer regarded as lying on the outskirts of their world; these included the Azande, Europeans, and the Bongo etc., although the Nuer have differentiating terms for most of them.

POPULATION

161 Official estimate of population is 260,000. Estimates for the various tribes are given approximately as follows by Evans-Pritchard.(2)
619

THE EASTERN NUER

The Sobat Nuer				The Zeraf Nuer		
Gaajak	Gaawag	Gaajok	Lou	Lak	Thieng	Gaawar
42,000	7,000	42,000	33,000	24,000	9,000	20,000

THE WESTERN NUER

Bul	Leek	3 Western Jikany Tribes	Jagei Tribes	Dok	Nuong
17,000	11,000	11,000	10,000	12,000	9,000

NOMENCLATURE

101 The Nuer call themselves *Naath*, (sing. *Ran*). The Shilluk, Arabs and Dinka call them *Nuer*. The Nuer also speak of the tribes west of the Bahr el Jebel as *Nath cieng* - 'the homeland Nuer', and of those east of the river as *Nath Doar* - 'Bush Nuer'.(3)

THE ATWOT

000 These appear to be a Nuer tribe, speaking a Nuer dialect, but having adopted many Dinka habits. They are situated in the Lakes district south west of Yirrol, south of the Dinka; they number 31,600 approximately. Little is known of them.

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.132.
(2) Ibid. p.117.
(3) Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, 1932, p.207.

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ashes from it are smeared over the body. Cattle urine is used in churning and cheese-making and also for washing. Evans-Pritchard rightly calls the Nuer 'parasites of the cow'.(1) 237

The social importance of cattle among the Nuer

The fact that cattle have more than an economic value may be amply illustrated from the part they play in social life. 231

Relationships with neighbouring tribal groups are partly dependent on the value attached to cattle. The Nuer are contemptuous of those who have no cattle, while they raid those who have in order that they may augment their own herds. A man will defend his cattle to the last and will die for the sake of the herds. Disputes within the Nuer tribe are often about cattle and about the ownership of pastures and water supplies necessary for their well-being. Cattle are paid in compensation for homicide and injury. It is the needs of the cattle which compel the yearly dry-season migration to fresh pastures. [721] [691]

Cattle form the bridewealth of the Nuer, that is, the successive transfers of cattle from the bridegroom's family to that of the bride marking the fact of marriage. Cattle are farmed out among friends as a precaution against the total destruction of a herd by disease; thus they tend to consolidate friendships and to maintain the network of relationships between people within a village and between the inhabitants of separate villages. [593] [572]

Family relationships are expressed in terms of cattle, as are the rules of incest and the status of an individual. Men take 'ox-names' - names which refer to the colour or other peculiarities of their favourite animals. In ritual cattle play an important part; they are sacrificed to the spirits and, when he desires to establish contact with ghosts and spirits, a man rubs ashes along the back of an animal, invoking the ancestral spirits as he does so. Cows are dedicated to the totemic spirits and the sky spirits. Daily life revolves round the needs of cattle; Nuer think cattle and talk cattle. Oxen are valued for display and prestige, and the merits of their favourite beasts are boasted of by their owners. Nuer language is rich in terms describing the various attributes of cattle. Tassels, decorations and carved tethering pegs are made by the owners, while the favourites in the herd will be played with, sung to and have poems made up about them. Young men will get boys to lead their favourite ox round the village for all to admire and will themselves leap behind it. Among the Nuer there is scarcely any aspect of life into which cattle do not enter and play an important part. Evans-Pritchard writes that the Nuer define all social processes and relationships in terms of cattle and that their social idiom is a bovine idiom. [551] [752] [192]

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(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.30.

tribes. The people in a district intermarry, conduct feuds, go raiding together, and so forth. 634

Nowhere in Nuerland do environmental conditions permit complete autonomy and exclusiveness of small village units. Pastoral pursuits and the needs determining transhumance cause concentrations of people and co-operation for half the year in dry-season camps, thus creating a wide inter-dependence which is lacking among the Anuak and many other tribal groups. 621

TRIBAL CHARACTERISTICS

Each tribe has a name, occupies a particular territory and owns and defends its own building sites, pastures and water supplies. Large rivers, or wide stretches of uninhabited country, generally divide adjacent sections of contiguous tribes, and these sections tend to move in different directions in the drought. Members of the same tribe have feelings of cohesion and fellowship with each other which do not extend to members of other tribes.(1) The age sets are organised tribally. 619

The tribe is the largest group of which the members habitually combine for raiding and for defensive measures. During the period of military unity, there is a truce to internal disputes. Inter-tribal fighting is fierce but is subject to certain conventions concerning women and children which do not extend to fighting between Nuer and Dinka or other neighbours. 619 721

Within a tribe compensation *(cut)* is paid for homicide. This is the invariable definition of tribal allegiance in every part of Nuerland.(2) Between tribesmen there is also *ruok* - compensation for torts other than homicide. If a man kills or injures a man of another tribe no breach of law is recognised; no obligation is felt to settle the dispute and there is no machinery to do so. 619 682 683

A tribe is a segmented structure in that it consists of a number of small divisions, each occupying a particular part of the tribal territory. There is opposition between these segments as well as a certain co-operation and cohesion. 619

Within each tribe there is a dominant clan and there is a close relationship between the lineage structure of this clan and the various territorial segments of the tribe. This is of the greatest importance for understanding Nuer structure and organisation.

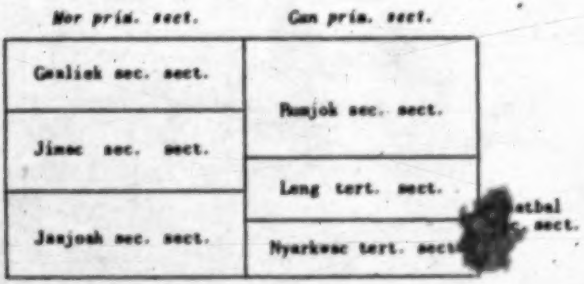
Nuer tribes have no common organisation or central administration making for political unity in the generally accepted sense of the word. Yet adjacent tribes do form a political system and, in spite of inter-tribal opposition, will display a united opposition to different neighbouring groups.

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p. 121.
(2) *Ibid.*

TERRITORIAL SEGMENTS

619 Nuer tribes are split into a number of segments. For example, the Lou tribe is segmented into Gun and Mor primary sections; Gun primary section is segmented into Rumjok and Gaatbal secondary sections and the Gaatbal secondary section into Leng and Nyarkwac tertiary sections. A tertiary section consists of a number of village communities. The diagram given by Evans-Pritchard to illustrate this tribal segmention is reproduced below.(1)

LOU TRIBE



All other Nuer tribes follow this pattern, although the degree of segmention may vary according to the size of the tribal unit. The segments of a tribe have the same characteristics as a tribe, but the smaller the segment the stronger the sentiments of unity. Each segment of a tribe tends to have its own special dry-season pastures. Each segment in its turn has a segmented structure and there is opposition between its parts. Members of
●[721] any segment unite for war against adjacent segments of the same order and unite with these adjacent segments against larger sections. For example, if there is a fight between Mor and Gun primary sections Rumjok and Gaatbal (the secondary segments of Gun primary segment), will unite against the combined Mor secondary sections. Both primary sections (each comprising all their smaller segments) will unite against another tribe. This principle of segmentation and the opposition between segments is the same in every section of a tribe and even extends beyond the tribe.(2)

578 The Nuer distinguish between various types of hostility:
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721

1. *Dwac.* Individual duelling.
2. *Ter.* A feud within a tribe where compensation can be made.
3. *Kur.* A fight between tribes where no compensation can be made.
4. *Pec.* Raiding Dinka.

578 When a man conceives himself to have been wronged there is no court of law to which an appeal may be made. The only method of settlement is by a duel. Boys fight with spiked bracelets; men of the same village or camp

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.139.
(2) *Ibid.*, p.143.

with clubs. Spears are not used between neighbours lest someone be killed and a blood feud started which will disrupt the community. No third person may intervene in these duels. 578

In fights between persons of different villages spears are used and every adult male takes part. Fighting occurs mainly between small tribal segments; only occasionally between primary segments or tribes. Feuds cannot occur except within a tribe for it is only in the tribal unit that a breach of law is recognised and the machinery for settlement exists. Between tribes settlement can only be effected by war. 628

THE SETTLEMENT OF A BLOOD FEUD

The slayer seeks sanctuary with the leopard-skin chief who will ritually cleanse him and make a sacrifice to protect him from the vengeance of the spirit of the slaughtered man and his kinsmen. Vengeance is the most binding obligation of paternal kinship. After an interval, negotiations for compensation are begun. In theory 40 to 50 cattle are paid; in practice ceremonies of atonement are performed when about 20 have been handed over. The cattle are distributed among the kin of the dead man and a certain number of them are used to secure a wife who will be married in the dead man's name. The leopard-skin chief receives two beasts, and the meat of the sacrifices, but in fact he often gets nothing and may have to help in paying the compensation. He also has the expense of keeping the slayer during the period before settlement. 783

Feuds occurring between small groups are settled quickly, especially those within a village, where ties are so close that ordinary life would be completely disrupted if a blood feud were to continue for any length of time. It is much more difficult to settle a feud between persons of different tribal segments than between persons in the same tribal segment.(1)

Theoretically, all feuds in a tribe can be settled by compensation but this does not always occur in feuds involving primary tribal sections. If people are killed in a large-scale fight, compensation is not always paid nor revenge taken; kinsmen merely wait until the next fight occurs.

A feud arises only between two agnatic kin groups but, owing to the extent of kinship ties and local sentiment, a whole tribal section may support the lineage within it which is at feud with a lineage in another tribal section. The close association between territorial units and kinship units makes the feud an important aspect of inter-segment relationships.

HOSTILITY BETWEEN THE NUER AND DINKA

The Nuer and Central Dinka are very similar in culture and organisation, but they are ancient enemies and constantly raided each other in the past. The attack was usually made after the rains by the Nuer, who would establish a base in Dinka country and spend several weeks there raiding in all directions. The Dinka did not offer much resistance, merely attempting to flee to safety with their cattle. This constant raiding was partly due to lack of resistance, and the advantages of obtaining extra cattle, 72/●

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.159.

721 grain supplies, women and so forth, but it has been suggested that war between the two groups is a structural relationship.(1) The Nuer have incorporated a considerable area of Dinkaland into their own territories and have also absorbed the Dinka population: the result has been fusion and not a class structure.(2)

THE NATURE OF LAW AMONG THE NUER

The settlement of feuds is effected only when both parties to a dispute are willing to come to an agreement and apply to the leopard-skin chief as mediator. He hears the matter discussed by both sides, and then gives his opinion, which is accepted as a verdict if both parties agree to it. He cannot order a discussion or compel either party to accept a decision. Compensation in cattle, according to a recognised scale, is paid for homicide, adultery, fornication and physical injury.

754 Sorcerers are killed by individuals or groups; it does not appear that any actions are regarded as injurious to the whole community.

671 Law is relative to the positions of the parties in the social structure, and to the distance between them in the kinship, lineage, age-set and political systems. The more widely separated are the two parties to a dispute the weaker is the obligation to settle it and the more difficult the task of enforcing settlement. Unless a man resorts to self-help and is backed by powerful kinsmen and by public opinion, he has little chance of redress. Traditional modes of settling disputes, a recognition of a notion of right *(cuong)* and the acknowledgment of certain scales of compensation, form the basis of Nuer law.

RECOGNISED SOCIAL FIGURES AMONG THE NUER

The Leopard-Skin Chief (kuaar muon)

791 He is a sacred person and is believed to have a mystical association
624 with the earth which gives him certain ritual powers to bless or curse it. His acts are mainly of a ritual nature and he has no great political authority, though some importance attaches to his since relations between groups are regulated through him;(3) his powers do not, however, normally extend beyond a tribal section. He functions are as follows:-

(a) His intervention is necessary in settling feuds and disputes. Leopard-skin chiefs sometimes prevent fights between two communities by running between the two opposing forces, hoeing up earth here and there. Probably this can only be done when the majority on both sides is unwilling to come to blows.

(b) He performs ritual to cleanse those who have broken incest rules.

(c) He has slight rain-making powers.

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.131.
(2) *Ibid.*, p.125.
(3) *Ibid.*, p.176.

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fills a man, his character is changed. The man is hollowed out by Spirit to receive it. In this sense *gwang* is complementary to *kwoth*, inspiration to extirpation.[1]

Prophets may perform sacrifices on behalf of individuals or of the people of their neighbourhoods in times of sickness, for barrenness, and on other occasions when spiritual aid is required, but the main social function of the leading prophets in the past was to direct cattle-raids on the Dinka and fighting against the various foreigners who troubled the Nuer from the northern Sudan. For the most part the air-spirits are conspicuously associated with war, and Nuer prophets are chiefly regarded as the medium through which God gives orders to fight and victory. The spirits accompany the warriors to battle.

Before Nuer set off for any large-scale fighting against strangers their prophets made sacrifice and sang hymns to the spirits of the air while the warriors, kneeling on one knee and with the points of their spears resting on the ground, sang the responses. The same posture is adopted by warriors in making the responses to these songs when they are sung by a song-leader on ceremonial occasions. Also people, generally and perhaps always under a prophet's direction, sing hymns to the spirits on occasions of sickness and of other troubles; though Nuer say that they sometimes sing the hymns, as at dances, 'just to be happy with the son of God'. Unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to record more than a few verses of these hymns.

I give below a short hymn to *buk*. It is known all over Nuerland and is therefore probably earlier than most hymns. It is sometimes sung at mortuary ceremonies, and it is also sung before fishing battues are begun, on account of the spirit's association with rivers and streams.

> Mother of *deng*, the ants (the Nuer) ransom their lives from thee,
> Mother of *dengkur*, the ants ransom their lives from thee,
> The mother of *dengkur* brings life,
> The mother of *dengkur* brings me life,
> Life is revived.
> She brings life and our children play,
> They cry aloud with joy,
> With the life of the mother of *deng*, with the life of the mother of *deng*.

[1] [Should be expiration, see errata, cat. 116.] (45)

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SPIRITS OF THE ABOVE

x 776
533
539

The pied crows are given life and are filled.[1]
Our speech is good, we and *buk*,
Our speech is excellent;
The country of the people is good.
We journey on the path of the *pake*.[2]
We are here, we and *buk deang*,
Buk, mother of *deng*, the ants ransom their lives from thee,
Mother of *dengkur*, the ants ransom their lives from thee.
We give thee red blood.
The ants of *deng* are simple people, they do not understand how their lives are supported.
Let all the people of the cattle camps bring tobacco to the river.

The general sense of this hymn is that *buk* protects the people from dangers and gives them life. Protection and life are given them in exchange for oblations of animals (the red blood) and tobacco. I give the opening verses of another hymn, which appears to be addressed to both *dayim* and *mani*. It is a war hymn, although I heard it myself at a ceremony in western Nuerland held in honour of a person killed by lightning.

x 776
533
539
●721

Stars and moon which are in the heavens,
Blood of *deng* which you have taken,[3]
You have not summoned the ants of *deng* capriciously,[4]
Blood of *deng* which you have taken,
The wing of battle on the river bank is encircled by plumes.[5]
Dayim, son of God, strike the British to the ground,
Break the steamer on the Nile and let the British drown,
Kill the people on the mountains,[6]
Kill them twice,[7]

[1] The pied crow 'is' *buk* (p. 81).

[2] This is not a Nuer word but the Arabic *faki*, a fakir or holy man. In Nuer the word is used for an Arab pedlar or merchant. The use of the word in this hymn, probably one of the oldest Nuer hymns, is further evidence of the late introduction of these spirits into Nuerland.

[3] Dinka blood on Nuer spears.

[4] The spirits which summoned the Nuer to raid the Dinka through the mouths of their prophets did not summon them in vain. The raid was successful. The ants are the Nuer.

[5] When warriors are drawn up for battle the prophet runs along the flanks shouting encouragement to them and waving his spear decorated with ostrich plumes.

[6] The people of the Nuba hills.

[7] Slay them two years in succession.

SPIRITS OF THE ABOVE

Do not slay them jestingly.[1]
Mani goes with a rush,
He goes on for ever,
The sons of Jagei are proud in the byres,[2]
Proud that they always raid the Dinka.

I do not know the time or circumstances of composition of this hymn, but as it not only exults in defeats of the Dinka and asks for victory over the people of the Nuba hills but also demands the destruction of the British it must be fairly recent and probably dates from the early days of British occupation of the Southern Sudan. Dr. Lienhardt has recorded a hymn about *deng* which vividly suggests the mobility of the spirits of the air and the ubiquity of Spirit. A man says he is tired of the demands made by *deng* and that he will move. But *deng* replies

A man avoiding *deng*
Will find *deng* in front,
On the right he will find *deng*,
On the left he will find *deng*,
Behind him he will find *deng*.

In another hymn he recorded there is a metaphor in which protection of the people by *deng* is compared to the coiling of a python around its young. These hymns are, I believe, always the creations of prophets, and Nuer say that they come to them in dreams, unlike ordinary songs or poems which men construct for themselves when idling, as when herding in the grazing grounds. We need not concern ourselves greatly with their word to word meaning. Nuer do not do so, or even know it, and the songs may be sung on occasions which in no way concern the particular spirits they are addressed to and for which the words have no relevance, the songs merely serving to create atmosphere and to express a general sense and intention. I have been told that the hymns sometimes come to a prophet through a drum, called *bul kwoth*, spirit's drum, dedicated to his spirit, which is thought to be in some way immanent in it. These drums, which are beaten at dances held in honour of the spirits to which they are dedicated, are formally dedicated by being rubbed with ashes, in the same

[1] Do not trifle with them but strike them hard.
[2] The Jagei are a small group of Nuer tribes; but since the Nuer believe that they were created in their territory the word probably here refers to the Nuer as a whole.

clan beat an ox-hide his next child might be born without teeth in the gums of the upper jaw as a cow is without upper incisors. A further observance said to obtain in the clan is that their women may not cross a marshy shallow without first kicking some water out of it. People say that the Jikul are *jikwoth*, God's people, in that they are an augury in war, for if a man on the side they are supporting in a fight should be the first to be wounded their party knows that it will be defeated and should retire, whereas if a man of the other side is the first to be wounded they know by this that they will be victorious and should press forward. When a girl of the clan is married a cow of her bridewealth goes to the hide-spirit, and if she is later divorced this cow remains with her parents as indemnity for the hides the people sat on during the marriage negotiations. Mr. B. A. Lewis tells me that when he suggested holding a dance in a village mostly occupied by a Jikul lineage in the Lak tribe he was asked to make a present to the chief man of the community in compensation for the beating of the tympanum of the drum.

The Jikoi clan respect rafters (*koi*) and rope used in the building of byres and huts. They use them for building but they will not use those of an old habitation for fuel. It is related that in ancient times men of this clan tried to build a byre which would reach to the clouds. Other people said that this could not be done because the clouds were far away, and there was much argument on the matter during the building. God in the sky heard the argument and was angered at the presumption of those who wanted to build a byre to reach the heavens, and he sent down lightning and destroyed the builders.

I have mentioned all Nuer totems of which I have certain knowledge and I now say a few words about totemistic relationships before discussing some of the chief features of Nuer totemism and its significance for an understanding of their conception of Spirit. In Nuerland one often finds that individuals respect classes of things not respected by other members of their lineages or even by their close kin. There are people, probably all or mostly of Dinka origin, who refrain from eating certain parts of beasts: entrails, heart, liver, kidneys, spleen, head, and hooves. In those few cases I have inquired into, the association was said to have come about through a misfortune connected with the parts abstained from. For example, people who abstain from eating hearts

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name of the person and Gaaliek the name of the lineage of his descendants.

I have attempted to show that the spear brandished in sacrificial invocations stands for the person and that when this person speaks as a representative and on behalf of the clan, as he does in collective sacrifices, it stands for the clan. In the one case it is the right hand (vitality) of the individual and in the other the right hand (vitality) of the ancestor (the clan) which is emphasized. In the second case the spear is closely associated with the idea of the clan as a battle host.

When we ask why clans should be symbolized by a spear, or rather by the idea of a spear contained in a spear-name, and not by something else, we cannot give an acceptable answer in terms of the scarcity, and therefore high value, of iron nor in terms of simple utility. The symbol is not *yieth* or *you*, iron.[1] Nor is it the *bidh*, the fishing-spear, which is perhaps even more essential for Nuer than the fighting-spear, for they have no substitute for it and could not survive without a good supply of fish. It is the *mut*, the iron fighting-spear. The fact that the wood, horn, and bone pointed spears do not figure as symbols might suggest that it is because it is made of iron, which lasts longer and makes a more efficient weapon, that the *mut* is the symbol of clans, but it appears to me to be a more satisfactory explanation that it is because the *mut* not only stands for the right hand and hence vitality but is also the symbol of going to war and of making sacrifice.

The word *mut*, besides meaning a fighting-spear, has a general sense of taking part in war and raiding: *'ce Nath wa mut'*, 'the Nuer went raiding'; *'ca mut nang Jaang'*, 'war was taken (by the Nuer) to the Dinka'. The idea expressed by the word *mut* in these examples is not so much the general idea of war and raiding as the idea of a collectivity, the clan or lineage in its political or tribal embodiment, going to war or going on a raid. Hence Father Kiggen correctly translates *'te ke mud mediid'* (his spelling) as 'they have a big army'.[2] By synecdoche 'spear' stands for 'battle host'.

[1] It is true that Nuer lick any metal in taking an oath (p. 297), but I regard this as being a derivation from licking a spear, for which any metal stands as a substitute, in the same way as the honorific titles of the Gaatgankir clan, son, and daughter, of iron, derive from the *wiu* spear. The words *yieth*, metal, and *yiedh*, to spear or to stab, are surely connected.

[2] J. Kiggen, op. cit., p. 206. One may ask, in the light of this discussion about

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It is, I believe, in some such sense of the clan militant that we should interpret the spear symbolism of the clans. Nuer always speak of 'spear' where I have used the expression 'spear-name'. However, not only are there in almost all cases no actual spears, but it is not even the idea of any particular spear that they have in mind. What they have in mind is the clan as a whole for which the spear stands as a symbol not just as a spear but as representing the collective strength of the clan in its most conspicuous corporate activity, for clans and lineages are most easily and distinctly thought of as collectivities—through their identification with tribes and tribal segments—in relation to war. That the representation is of the clan as a battle host is shown by the Nuer statement about their clan spears that they only exist in the sense that 'they are in the mouths of men when they go to battle'. Two remarks made by Nuer give further support to an interpretation along these lines. One man said of all clan spears that '*tuokdien e wiu*', 'their origin is *wiu*', and that *wiu* is the *kwoth*, spirit, of all clan spears. There was some discussion about this remark among Nuer present, and I gathered from it that all clan spears in this wide and symbolic sense of the word *mut* as the battle host signify the clan as a social group in relation to God in the conception of him as Lord of Hosts. The man could not have meant that other clan spears were derived or copied from the spear *wiu*. That would have made no sense, both because there are no actual spears and also because the Gaatgankir clan who own the spear *wiu* are regarded by everybody as a Dinka clan of later origin than the true Nuer clans. That a spiritual conception of *wiu* was meant is further evident from a remark made to me by another Nuer, a man of exceptional ability, that when the Gaatgankir clan reach ten generations from their ancestor Kir—when they have grown up, so to speak—they will doubtless cease to respect (*thek*) the

the *mut*, why it is that the title of spiritual leaders in Dinkaland is taken from the fishing-spear (*bith*) instead of from the fighting-spear. An explanation might be put forward in terms of the analysis I have presented. Whereas among the Nuer the fighting-spear is the symbol of the clan because what is being symbolized is exclusiveness and opposition, among the Dinka the fishing-spear is the symbol of spiritual leadership because what is being symbolized is inclusiveness and unity. This is a guess but it receives some support from the fact that among the Nuer, at any rate in western Nuerland, when a leopard-skin priest goes to settle a feud he is accompanied by a kinsman called the *gwan biedh*, the master of the fishing-spear, which is the title of the Dinka spiritual leaders. However, this may be a loan from the Dinka.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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spear *wiu*, as they do at present, and will respect (the word is here used to balance the statement and not literally) only its name. As we should put it, they will not then feel the need for a material symbol of the spiritual relationship, and a verbal or ideational symbol will suffice. The association of clan spears with the spirit *wiu* is clear to us when we recall that the spirit is also associated with lightning with which, in this hypostasis, God strikes as man strikes with the spear.[1]

In invocations in which clans are involved as such God is appealed to, as I have explained earlier, in some refraction by which he is figured as their patron. This is the '*kwoth gwara*', 'the God of our fathers'. It is on such occasions also that the spear-name of the clan is shouted out as an exordium to the invocation. This is the '*mut gwara*', 'the spear of our fathers'. I would suggest that we have here in the spear-name a symbolic representation of the clan in its relation to God. God is invoked in relation to the clan through the spear of the ancestor held in imagination in the hand of one of his descendants.

If this interpretation is right, then in those sacrifices in which the clan as a whole is concerned the calling out of the clan spear-name by the officiant identifies the whole clan with the intention of the sacrifice as spoken in the invocation. The sacrificial spear in his hand becomes through the exordium the clan sacrificial spear through which in symbol the whole clan offers up the victim to God. The officiant in such sacrifices must therefore be a representative of the clan, what the Nuer call a *gwan buthni*; whereas in personal and piacular sacrifices, in which appeal is made on behalf of an individual or a number of individuals, anyone can officiate and the officiant is usually a senior member of the family or kin of the sacrificer. The intention, and therefore character, of the sacrificial act is different in the two cases. In the first it is of the nature of a validation, in the second of the nature of a *piaculum*; though in some situations there may be a broad overlap. Religion has always these two sides, the one concerned chiefly with the social life and the other with the relation of the individual soul to its God.

[1] Nuer, however, use for God striking a man with lightning the verbs *mar*, to strike, and *pim*, to strike in the sense of 'to hit' or 'to punch', and not *yiedh*, to strike in the sense of to thrust or to stab.